

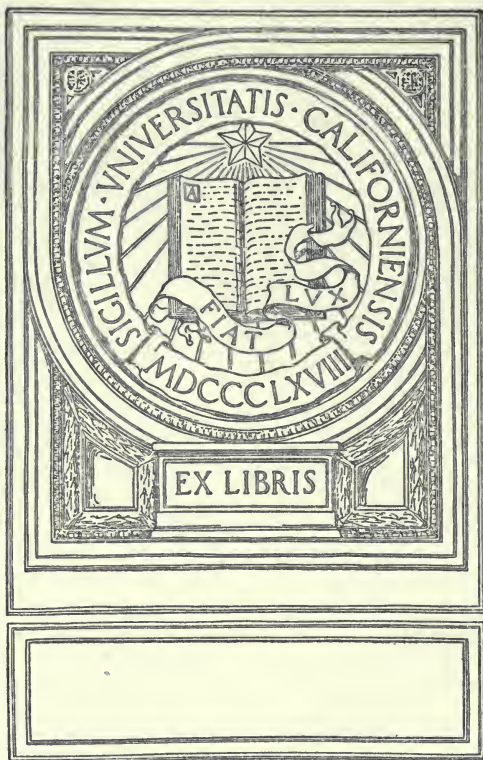
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# THE SLAVS: PAST AND PRESENT

LUDWIK EHRLICH

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## THE SLAVS: PAST AND PRESENT\*

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LUDWIK EHRLICH

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If any one of you had been told some time ago that there was to be such a thing as a war which would give the Slavs permanent importance in the world, he would probably have experienced a rather uncomfortable feeling. I confess that that would not surprise me at all, because the general attitude of western Europe and of America toward the Slavs for many generations has been one of little understanding and much fear. The Slavs usually have been represented as a group of very low civilization and, consequently, as a group of nations or tribes which was a distinct menace to all civilized nations. Sometimes the western neighbors of the Slavs, the Germans, were trying to sow discord between Russia, as representing the eastern Slavs, and Poland, a member of the western Slav group. More often all Slavs were described by the Germans and their friends as barbarians against whom the Germans had to guard the treasures of European science, art, and political institutions.

No sooner had the present war broken out than the famous German professor Von Harnack reminded Americans of the Slav menace: "But now before my eyes I see rising up . . . another culture, a culture of the horde whose government is patriarchal, a civilization of the mob which

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\* A lecture delivered at the University of California on October 23, 1917.



is brought together and held together by despots, the Byzantine—I must extend it further—Mongolian-Muscovite culture. . . . This culture was not able to bear the light of the eighteenth century, still less that of the nineteenth, and now, in this twentieth century, it breaks out and threatens us—this unorganized mob, this mob of Asia; like the sands of the desert it would sweep down over our harvest fields; . . . our culture, the chief treasure of mankind, was in large part, yes, almost wholly, intrusted to three peoples: to us, to the Americans, and—to the English. . . . Two still remain.”<sup>1</sup>

I need hardly remind you that this last was a comment on England’s having “dared” to ally herself with Russia.

About the same time two other famous German scholars, Eucken (professor of philosophy at Jena) and Haeckel (professor of zoology at Jena), issued two appeals in which they said: “England fights in behalf of a Slavic, half Asiatic power against Germanism<sup>2</sup>; . . . Russia . . . wanted to raise the Muscovites against the Germans and the Western Slavs, and to lead Asia into the field against Europe.”<sup>3</sup> And in the middle of 1915 a manifesto of numerous German professors said again: “. . . we Germans rose as one man, from the highest to the meanest, realizing that we must defend not only our external life but also our inner, spiritual and moral life—in short, defend German and European *Kultur* against barbarian hordes from the east. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

These words may have had a new meaning to you. To us in the east of Europe German opinions expressed in such language have been known for centuries. Whenever there was a question of extending German power eastward there has always been at hand some one ready to invite the

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times Current History*, I, 199 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 535.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 536.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 163.

Germans to defend their civilization against eastern barbarians, and to invite the civilized nations of the world to help the Germans, or at least not to obstruct them. The martyrdom of the Poles in Prussian Poland, that of the Bohémians in their native country under Austrian sway—these were stages in the victorious progress of Germanism against Slavic barbarism.<sup>5</sup>

I suppose most of you look at the paper every morning to see what is happening in Russia, perhaps with a half suppressed wish that the Russian people would postpone their ultra-democracy for a short time at least, until Germany is defeated. But Russia is not the only Slav country. There are Slav nations besides her, nations which have contributed and will contribute to the progress of the world. Of many of them you have not heard much. At this moment the Prussian eagle and his ally, the old, worn out but rapacious Austrian bird, hold their booty as tightly as they can. Now and again you hear a weak, a very faint cry of despair, a cry for help—but you hardly pay attention to it.

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<sup>5</sup> It must be said in fairness to German scholars that such has not always been their general attitude toward Slavs, and toward Slav civilization. One of the honorable exceptions will be found in the following words of Professor Roepell of Halle, translated from the foreword to his *History of Poland* (1840): "It is not easy for us Germans to comprehend and appreciate impartially the national spirit of the Slavs; but by purely denying, by absolutely condemning it, as we find rather often done these days, one shall certainly not get to the bottom of the thing. Every year that group of nations seems to increase in political importance for the history of the world, and at the same time a new intellectual life has begun to manifest itself at present, and is apparent not less in Bohemia, Hungary" (the author meant the Slavs under Hungarian rule), "Galicia, and with the Poles, than in Russia, which in a certain way may be considered as the center of all these strivings. With all those tribes one can observe a lively, active return to the old language, literature, and history of each people; there appears a multitude of new periodicals, monuments of songs and chronicles are being gathered, history is being searched; in a word, they try to give new life to the consciousness of their nationality, where it is broken at least to preserve it, and on the other hand to regenerate it, to lead it toward a higher development, by a more active interest in the learning and generally the intellectual life of the West. . . ." That was some five or six decades ago. How much progress since!

And then the hangman steps in over there—and everything is quiet—at least so it seems to ill-informed outsiders.

You simply had not been given your opportunity of learning what those various Slavic nations are. I do not want to give you an idealized picture of a wonderful group of nations which I should describe to you as Slavs. I do not wish to deny that the Slavs have many faults, that they are often far from the ideal at which they aim; but I do want to say that they are not as uncivilized, not as unworthy of your sympathy, of your coöperation, as some of you have been led to believe. For this purpose I shall have to make some reference to their history, and to the political conditions in which they have lived up to the present time. The Slavs are human beings; they have committed and are committing many mistakes, but they want to correct them. To err is human. That is true of every nation.

The war has given you an opportunity of learning about the Slavs. We read every day about Russia. The President of this country many months ago stated, in words which make every true Polish heart beat faster, that there must be a “united, independent, and autonomous Poland.” You have all heard of the martyrdom of the Serbians. And more and more urgently do the Bohemians appeal to the world to help them against Hapsburg oppression. The opportunity to learn becomes a duty to learn, for no free people can watch leisurely the enslavement of other nations without becoming liable to lose its own freedom. And so the statesmen of this great nation have assented to the postulate of the European Allies that there shall be reconstruction on the basis of nationality. This must mean, among other things, the liberation of the Slavs who are now under the German yoke. So the question you have to ask yourself is, Is it good to help the Slavs, or is it bad?

According to a common theory, very many centuries ago the ancestors of those nations which we now call Slavs lived in the country now described as Galicia (Austrian



Poland). Some of them, starting from that original seat, went south and occupied what is now Hungary and thence went far into the Balkan peninsula. Others went west, far beyond the territory in which stands Berlin—no Germans were there at that time. Still others went north and east. The original Slavs were, of course, not a civilized group of tribes. They were barbarians, just as their western neighbors, the Germans, were. The Germans occupied the Roman Empire, destroyed it, took over some rudiments of what they allowed to survive of Roman civilization, and at the same time began to press the Slavs back. They subdued the outlying Slav countries and turned the population mostly into slaves. Then a German Roman Empire was created, and on its eastern outskirts were formed marches with the special object of fighting the Slavs. On the other hand, from Scandinavia the Vikings were making their way into Russia, while from the east Mongolic invaders, Bulgars and Magyars (the modern Hungarians) were attacking the southern Slavs, the Magyars conquering Hungary while the Bulgars subdued some of the Balkan Slavs (seventh century A.D.). The Magyars extirpated some of the Slavs they conquered and turned others into a subject population (ninth and tenth centuries A.D.). While those unfortunate victims have kept their Slavic tongue, the Magyars have stuck to their own language, which they still speak today. The Bulgars accepted the language of the conquered tribes and both groups came finally to form one nation partly of Mongolic, partly of Slavic, descent, but speaking a Slav tongue. Similar was the history of the Vikings in Russia. They organized the country into what we might call a political unit (ninth century). The organization was Norse, the bulk of the people Slavic, the language of the whole was Slavic—Russian.

The organization of Polish and Bohemian tribes proceeded on different lines. Both nations were united by the leaders of aboriginal tribes, who had proved the most efficient organizers in the defense against the Germans, but

had thereby also acquired enough power to conquer their own brethren. Serbian unity was likewise the result of what is called "union from within," that is, union by native organizers, and not by foreigners.

There is hardly a possibility of exaggerating the importance of geographical position in the history of those early Slavic organizations. If you can picture a map of the central and eastern part of Europe, with the Slavs occupying all the country from the west of Berlin to the east of Moscow, you will perceive that the western group of the Slavs was close to Italy, the heart of the Roman Empire, while the eastern Slavs were close to Constantinople, the capital city of the Eastern Roman Empire. Poles (966 A.D.), Bohemians, and the western group of the southern Slavs (now known as Slovenes and Croats) accepted Christianity from Rome, accepted the Roman-Latin alphabet, and became western in their civilization. Russia (988 A.D.) and the rest of the southern Slavs accepted ultimately, after some hesitation, the eastern Christian religion, the Orthodox faith as represented by Constantinople; they accepted the eastern script (specially adapted to Slavic sounds) and, generally speaking, accepted the eastern civilization as it existed in the Eastern Empire.

This was the way in which the group of Slavs, homogeneous at first perhaps, was organized into separate political units, generally divided by differences of religion and of civilization, heirs to the quarrel between Rome and Constantinople. The story of their misfortunes was not at an end. It has been their history up to the present moment.

First of all, in the first half of the thirteenth century Poland and Russia were visited by a great calamity in the shape of a new wave of Mongolic invaders from the east—the Tartars. If I wanted to be very cruel to the memory of the Tartars, I should be justified in saying that they behaved about as the Germans have now behaved in Belgium, Poland, and Northern France. You can not imagine the measure of destruction they wrought. They destroyed

the cities across which they came, they carried off men, women, and children, and at first it seemed as though there were no power on earth strong enough to resist them. They had a very efficient military organization and the wildness of their attack made all resistance impossible, just as if they had unexpectedly let loose clouds of poisonous gases. Finally Poland, whom they attacked after having converted Russia practically into a desert, collected as many forces as she could and after desperate efforts succeeded, not in beating the Tartars, but in stopping them. The Tartars turned back and went east. But they kept Russia in subjection for two centuries, and continued to attack Poland even later, one may say down to the eighteenth century. It was mainly in order to get rid of their yoke that the princes of Moscow, who were their vassals, organized despotic rule within their country, and acquired control over the other Russian principalities. Finally the Tartars ceased to be Russia's overlords, but, once it was acquired, the princes of Moscow did not give up their great political power. The organization of the country, originally very democratic, had been changed into a despotism, under the influence of Tartar example, to defeat the Tartars with their own weapon—that of a strong war machine. I must add that the theory of despotism was supplied to the princes of Russia, who soon began to style themselves Tsars (from Caesar), by Byzantine writers, subservient to the Eastern Emperors.

To make good the losses caused by the Tartars, Poland allowed German colonists to come in. Germany had not been affected by the Tartar invasions, and she never experienced any afterwards. Poland, in addition to suffering awful devastation at the hands of the Tartars, had to learn later on that the German settlers had “taught her civilization”—for that is what the Germans have never ceased to claim! Such was the gratitude of the German colonists. In fact, the country had been flourishing before the Tartar invasions—but what was she to do when hardly a stone remained in its place?



Then, in the fourteenth century, the Slavs were faced by another danger—the Turks. The Turks conquered Serbia and Bulgaria in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Europe was afraid and Poland accepted invitations from the west to help. A Polish king, elected king of Hungary, went, fought, and perished. The Poles continued to fight against the Turks until the Turks, who at first had not attacked Poland, turned against her. They were deadly enemies indeed. Their invasions lasted throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One would have to be a very good orator or a very brilliant novelist to do justice to all the romantic deeds which covered the arms of Poland with glory. You know only of a few incidents (such as the rescue of Vienna by King Sobieski in 1683), but the story was a continuous one. When Poland herself was in danger she could not count on any help from the west. When you are told that the southern Slavs have not a very high civilization nowadays, and when you hear people talk with contempt of the political institutions of Poland—why not remember that Serbia was for four or five centuries a conquered province in the hands of the Turk, and that Poland was for four or five centuries a camp of defenders not only of that unfortunate country but of western civilization as a whole? In sowing their land the Polish farmers were never sure that after a month, perhaps after a fortnight, the house would still stand unburned, that a single soul would remain alive. A short war produces far-reaching results in the life of a country—how much more so a war which lasts for centuries!

And the Tartars, the Turks, were not the only enemies. The Germans from the west were pressing harder and harder. At first themselves nothing but barbarous hordes, they had extirpated the Slavs who were living on the Elbe (the so-called Polab Slavs), and attacked those who lived farther east. The countries now known as the Mecklenburgs, Pomerania, and Saxony were among the early victims. In the meantime the Germans had come to regard themselves



as a civilized group, as defenders of Christianity, and their wars on the Slavs were then waged in the name of Christianity and civilization. Bohemia became Christian (ninth century); Poland, probably through the influence of Bohemia, became Christian (966 A.D.); but the fighting went on. At first it was done by the emperors themselves or by some margraves whom they had authorized. Later on, the Teutonic Knights, an order of fighting monks whom a Polish prince had allowed to settle (first half of the thirteenth century) in the northern part of Poland, now known as East Prussia, took over the "mission". They waged wars with a cruelty which could hardly be surpassed. By a supreme effort Poland, united with Lithuania, defeated them in the memorable battle of Grunwald and Tannenberg (1410). Afterward they still continued their gruesome expeditions, but finally had to become (as a secularized duchy) a vassal state of Poland (1525). They threw off allegiance to Poland in the seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth century the "King of Prussia" (a new title assumed in 1701 by the Duke of Prussia, whose predecessor had been the last Grand Master of the Knights and had secularized the order) was one of the chief participants in the partitions of Poland.

— In 1526 the Bohemian diet elected a German, a Hapsburg ruler of Austria, to the Bohemian throne. Very soon the new rulers started out to curtail the privileges of the country, the political life of which was very active. The throne remained elective, but in 1620, when the Bohemians tried to shake off the yoke, the battle of the White Mountain put an end to Bohemian freedom for over two centuries. Most of the nobility perished either in battle or on the scaffold, a ruthless reaction set in, and it was not until the political troubles of the Hapsburgs in the nineteenth century that Bohemia was allowed to breathe a little more freely, though she is still pining for real liberty in the civilized sense of the word.

Since the time of Peter the Great (the beginning of the

eighteenth century) the influence of Germans in Russia had been growing. The German element was gaining predominance in the bureaucracy, marriages with German princes and princesses were contracted by members of the dynasty; in the eighteenth century the male line of the house of Romanov (which had been on the throne since 1613) died out, and by the marriage of a Romanov heiress with a member of the Oldenburg dynasty the house of Holstein-Gottorp, a new dynasty, a German one, came to the throne in 1762. Thus the last Tsar of Russia, Nicolas II, was in the male line not a Romanov, but a Holstein-Gottorp. It will be unnecessary to remind you, moreover, that Catharine II was a German woman, who had married a Holstein-Gottorp Tsar.

The German Catharine II, the German Frederick II, and the German Maria Theresa of Austria were the three potentates who in 1772 began the partitions of Poland. Only eighty-nine years had elapsed since Sobieski, king of Poland, had saved Vienna from the Turks! Prussia and Austria united with the ruler of Russia—that country with the “culture of the horde,” with the “civilization of the mob which is brought together and held together by despots,” as Professor von Harnack tried to explain to you in the beginning of this war. Prussia and Austria did not shrink from an alliance with Russia, and intended to put an end to the political existence of Poland, a country of western Slavs with an entirely western civilization. It was not until 1914 that German professors discovered that one should not “raise the Muscovites against . . . the western Slavs, and . . . lead Asia into the field against Europe.” The explanation is simple. For the purpose of the partitions of Poland it was in the interest of Prussia to ally herself with Russia; so an alliance with Russia was right. In 1914 Prussia wanted to get American condemnation of England; so an alliance with Russia was wrong.

It is sometimes claimed that the partitions of Poland were necessary because of Polish “anarchy.” Can any one

imagine a worse anarchy than that which existed for centuries in the territory called the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation? The partitions of Poland were a matter of brute force and nothing else.<sup>6</sup>

And the partitions of Poland were not the last instance of a German appeal for Russian help. Prussia and Austria were not ashamed to fight side by side with Russia against Napoleon. Prussia was not ashamed to help Russia against the Poles in their revolutions of 1830-1 and 1863.<sup>7</sup> And the Hapsburgs were not ashamed to accept the help of Russia against the Hungarian insurgents of 1848-9. At that time it was to the Russian commander and not to the Austrians that the Hungarians had to surrender. And that "friendship" for Russia, or, in other words, that habit of helping the Tsar and his government and receiving help from them whenever there threatened some democratic movement for emancipation, for instance, some strenuous Polish efforts, continued until the very beginning of the present war. How else can you explain the following passage in a telegram which the German Emperor sent to the late Tsar, Nicolas II, on July 31, 1914: "The friendship for you and your country, bequeathed to me by my grandfather on his deathbed, has always been sacred to me, and I have stood faithfully by Russia while it was in serious affliction, especially during its last war?"

<sup>6</sup> See the speech by C. J. Fox on February 18, 1793, *Hansard's Parliamentary History*, XXX, 428 ff. The speech is illuminating if one wants to understand Prussian behavior during and before the present war.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., *Die Politischen Reden des Fürsten von Bismarck*, II, 114 ff., 111 ff.

<sup>8</sup> "German White Book," Introduction. Cf. *ibid.*, exhibit 20. It is worth while to note that late in March, 1917, the German Imperial Chancellor is said to have "referred to Germany's attitude toward recent events in Russia and recalled the honored friendship between the two countries in former times. He said, however, that this friendship ended with the death of Alexander II" (*New York Times*, March 30, 1917, p. 1, col. 8). Now, Alexander II died in 1881, and William II's grandfather lay on his deathbed in 1888. How could he bequeath to his grandson a friendship which, the Chancellor now claims, had terminated seven years before? And how could the present Emperor regard that long extinct friendship as sacred?



This refers to the affliction of the dynasty during the Russo-Japanese war; the German Emperor obviously had not given military assistance against the Japanese, for he was neutral! We in eastern Europe, however, have known all the time that German helped Russia in putting down the revolution. Moreover, is it not interesting to read those professions of long-standing friendship, made two weeks before the German professors started their thundering execrations of a "civilization of the mob which is brought together and held together by despots, the . . . Mongolian-Muscovite culture," etc.?

Ethnographically<sup>9</sup> the Slavs at present can be divided into four big groups. The eastern or Russian group is composed of three elements: the Great Russian (north and center), the White Russian (west), and the Little Russian (also called Ruthene, a name appearing in Latin in the fourteenth century) or Ukrainian (the Ukraine, or "Borderland," is a southern part of modern Russia). It is not easy to determine with the help of the statistics available how many millions of the Russian population are Little Russian rather than Great Russian. The former, however, can be estimated broadly at some twenty-five to thirty million. For a long time there has been a violent dispute, mostly literary but in places political, whether the Little Russians form a separate nation (as some of them claim) or whether their language is only a dialect of the Russian language and

<sup>9</sup> The following figures are intended to show approximately the present distribution of Slavic nations among political units and their proportion to the German and Magyar element in Austria-Hungary. It is impossible to obtain absolutely reliable statistics.

1. Serbia, about 5,000,000.
2. Montenegro, about 500,000 (almost all Serbs).
3. Bulgaria, about 5,000,000.
4. Russian Empire, about 180,000,000: Great Russians, 80,000,000; White Russians, 8,000,000; Ruthenes (Little Russians), 25,000,000; Poles, 12,000,000.
5. Poles: Austria, 5,000,000; Hungary, 100,000; Germany, 4,000,000. Czechs and Slovaks: Austria, 6,500,000; Hungary, 2,050,000; Germany, 130,000. Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes: Austria, 2,036,000; Hungary, 2,939,000; Bosnia, 1,800,000. Ruthenes: Austria, 3,600,000; Hungary, 475,000. Germans: Austria, 10,000,000; Hungary, 2,050,000. Magyars: Austria, 11,000; Hungary, 10,050,000.



their national customs only those of one part of the great Russian nation. Without expressing any opinion on the main question, I wish to say that the leaders of the Ukraine



Map 1—The Slavs and their neighbors.

The map shows those parts of central and eastern Europe in which the Slavs form at least the majority of the population. In the adjoining districts Slavs form more or less strong minorities.

movement (not the Little Russian people), especially in Galicia, have often taken an anti-Russian and pro-German point of view. That was true even long before the war. Their language differs from Great Russian in many details (the accent is sometimes different; the script is modified and spelling is phonetic, whereas in great Russian it is etymolog-

ical; there are differences in pronunciation; for instance, Great Russian has almost always a *g* where Little Russian has an *h*; the accent is often differently placed; many Great Russian words are replaced by others of Polish origin). The Russians are mostly Orthodox, but some millions of Little and White Russians are Catholic, either with the pure Latin rite or with a peculiar rite in which Church-Slavic is used; in the latter case their hierarchy has certain special privileges recognized by Rome; for example, there is a possibility of conferring the order of priesthood on married persons. The Provisional Government of Russia has lately recognized the claim of Little Russians to autonomy, and has granted autonomy to the "governments" (administrative provinces) of Kiev, Volhynia, Podolia, Tshernikhov, and to all other provinces in which the zemstvos demand it. X,

The Poles are mostly Roman Catholics, though there are Protestants and Jews. The Poles, whose civilization is entirely western, use the Latin alphabet, and the language contains both *h* and *g*; the accent in all words with more than one syllable falls on the last but one. The Germans have been trying to distinguish between Poles proper and the Mazurs and Kaszubs, in order to lessen in their statistics the number of Poles in the Polish provinces of the empire. The distinction is similar to one that might be made between the language of the United States and that of the Kentucky mountains.

The Bohemian group includes not only the Bohemians and the Moravians (another name for the Bohemian, or Czech, inhabitants of Moravia) but also the Slovaks of northern Hungary. Some of the most important Bohemian leaders, such as the famous Šafařík, were Slovaks. The Bohemians are almost exclusively Roman Catholic. They use the western alphabet; the accent in their words always falls on the first syllable and an *h* is always found where in Russian there is a *g*.

The southern Slavs have long been divided in religion and in the use of alphabet. The Serbs and Croats speak

*the Serbs*

the same language; but while some of ~~them~~ are Moham-  
 medan, the rest of the Serbs are mainly Orthodox and use  
 the eastern script; the Croats are Catholic and use the  
 western script. The latter they share with the Slovenes,  
 whose language is a dialect of the Serbo-Croat language  
 and whose religion is Catholic. The differences of religion  
 have long been the favorite means by which the Hapsburgs  
 have been trying to separate the three representatives of  
 the southern Slav family. Recently the representatives of  
 those three groups met on the island of Corfu and adopted  
 a programme of political union and freedom, for which they  
 crave the endorsement of the civilized world. Their position  
 in politics and law is now deplorable as is that of all the  
 other Slavs.

It is only the eastern group of Slavs that has for some  
 time formed a political unit, the Russian Empire, even so  
 under the rule of a German and pro-German dynasty and  
 bureaucracy. Suffice it to say that in Russian Poland,  
 Germans enjoyed much more influence with the government  
 than the Poles! Of the whole eastern group, only some  
 four million Ruthenes live partly under Austrian, partly  
 under Hungarian, domination.

The Poles are, on the other hand, in a most unfortu-  
 nate position. A proud nation which once was among the  
 most powerful in Europe is now divided into three parts—  
 one under Russian, the other under Austrian, the third  
 under Prussian domination. In the Austrian "share" of  
 Poland is included not only Galicia but also part of Silesia.  
 That part of Poland under German rule comprises not  
 only the Prussian province of "Posen," but also Prussian  
 Silesia (the eastern part of which is overwhelmingly Polish;  
 the coal mines situated there are the chief reason why Ger-  
 many dreads its loss); West Prussia, with the city of  
 Gdansk (Dantzick), which at the time of the partitions  
 violently opposed Prussian occupation<sup>10</sup> and for a long  
 time previously had favored the nationalist element in

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland*, 394.



Poland (for instance, at the elections of Polish kings) ; and parts of the province of East Prussia.

Almost the whole territory of which the Bohemians are natives is now under the rule of Austria and (Slovaks) of Hungary.



Map 2—Slavic territories in European states (1914).

- — — — — borders between states.
- ..... border between Austria, Hungary, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- ..... borders between nationalities within the same state (not between states).



The southern Slavs in the broader sense of the word include the semi-Slavic Bulgarians, who in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were emancipated from the Turkish yoke; and the southern Slavs proper, of whose number only those Serbs living in the country known as Montenegro have practically always been independent of Turkey. The kingdom of Serbia was emancipated in the course of the nineteenth century; Bosnia and Herzegovina passed from the Turkish under the Austro-Hungarian yoke ("occupation" 1878, "annexation" 1908); part of Serbian territory forms the kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia (under Hungarian domination); another part is incorporated in the kingdom of Hungary itself; still other Serbo-Croat lands, as well as those of the Slovenes, are organized as provinces of what is popularly called Austria, or the Austrian part of the Hapsburg monarchy. In most cases the Slovenes are inhabitants of provinces of which another part is German or Italian, so that the Hapsburgs can foster national differences and prevent an understanding between the subject races, or can rely on the German as against the Slavic element.

In all those countries where the Slavs are not left to themselves there has been boundless oppression. How could I within a few seconds describe to you all the unspeakable horrors of the Austrian régime in Bohemia, in Galicia, among the southern Slavs before the Hapsburg organization went to pieces in the wars with Italy, France, and Prussia, and a "constitutional régime" had to be inaugurated (in the sixties of the nineteenth century)? How am I to mention to you in a short time all the breaches of solemn promises, of statutes, of constitutional documents which have repeatedly been committed since then? Can you picture the tragedy of the present war, in which (unlike the English rule in Ireland, where there is no compulsory military service) Austria has drawn the main body of her armies from the Slavic conscripts and Germany has compelled her (conscripted) Polish regiments to fight

against those from whom Poland expects her liberty? Oh, there can indeed be no greater grief! *Nessun maggior dolore. . . .*

But I have been speaking of the Slavs in a way which might lead you to ask whether there is a common Slav group consciousness. From the time of the national separation of the different groups such a common consciousness between all groups has hardly existed. Difficulties of communication, differences of religion, of civilization, of political interests, separated the Slav groups. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries two tendencies became apparent, both of them called "Pan-Slavic." You should be careful to distinguish between them.

One was the purely political dream of Orthodox Tsardom and its supporters. It was the dream of uniting all Slavs under Russia's leadership, probably with Orthodoxy as their religion. The other tendency was one which has received more or less qualified assent in all Slavic groups. It is based on the consciousness of a common origin, of common roots in the different Slavic languages, of a need of common defense against common enemies, whether Turks or Germans; it aims at securing for the Slavs recognition as fully privileged members of the community of nations. Why should the English, German, French, and Italian languages be the only ones admissible in international congresses, to the exclusion of Russian and Polish? Why should the Slavs remain unknown, detested, slandered, barely tolerated whenever the history of civilization is discussed? Why should the civilized world endorse or silently overlook their martyrdom at the hands of Germany and Austria-Hungary? These and similar questions have led to the formation of different Slav societies of mutual help, to the organization of Slav congresses, and so forth. Would that there should result from this war a permanent federation of the Slavs, and their federation with the other civilized nations into a federation of the world!

The *other* civilized nations? But are the Slavs civilized? What have they done for civilization?

I should like to remind you again of the difficulties of development. Here was Russia, for more than two centuries under the overlordship of the Tartars. That was a circumstance certainly not intended to help promote civilization. The consequences of the Tartar period naturally lived much longer than Tartar domination itself. There was Serbia, under Turkish rule until the nineteenth century. The Germans seem to object to Great Britain's action in introducing Hindu troops into the war. And yet I claim that if a power could do anything to destroy its own claims to civilization, that would be an alliance with the Turks, the old enemies of European civilization, the old assailants of Christendom. It is not many centuries since Austria had to be defended by the Poles against Turkey—now Austria, Germany, and Turkey (with another semi-Mongolic group, the Bulgars) are happily united in an alliance against the civilized world. Perhaps one should not wonder at that, seeing what the record of the Hapsburgs themselves has been. For there, again, was Bohemia, with her old liberties trampled under foot, with her best "children" literally mowed down, for two and a half centuries—a helpless victim in the hands of her Hapsburg rulers.

And to remind you of still further difficulties, there was Poland, constantly struggling, now with the Tartars, now with the Turks. The downfall of the Polish cities, especially in the east, was due very largely to the establishment of Turkish rule in Constantinople (1453) and on the shores of the Black Sea, but Poland's fight against the Turks, the expedition of the Polish (and Hungarian) king in 1444 which resulted in his death, and the rescue of Vienna by Sobieski, were only episodes in a long series of struggles undertaken at first, and very often later on, out of pure idealism, out of a desire to rid civilization of the Turkish menace. Nevertheless, Poland had at the same time to defend herself against the Germans on her western



border: at first it was the newly created Empire, then the Teutonic Knights, also called Knights of the Cross (their sign, the Black Cross which they wore on their white gowns, is still a symbol of German militarism, and appears, for instance, on the German airplanes). And then for the Knights of the Cross was substituted (a change in name, but not in spirit) the Russian state, which was instrumental in bringing about the partitions of Poland in the end of the eighteenth century. Since those days there has been oppression by the three partitioning powers, at first by Austria and Prussia more than by Russia, then especially by Austria, then by Austria and Russia more than by Prussia, and then by Prussia more than by any other. Prussia has not only oppressed the Poles in the parts of Poland which she occupies. She has also backed up Russia, down to the outbreak of the present war. And this "friendship" for the Tsar's government has been another difficulty in the way of Slav development.

Despite all these difficulties, the Slavs have helped civilization. They have helped it, first of all, by defending it, as well as defending their own homesteads, against Tartars and Turks. That was true especially of Russia and Poland; Serbia was a great, heroic victim of the Turkish onslaught in the fourteenth century, as she has become one of the victims of the Teutonic onslaught in the twentieth century. But the Slavs have also helped to develop European civilization positively.

It is not claimed by any sensible person that the Slavs are not indebted to other nations and groups of nations. The Slavs have taken over western and eastern civilization, that of Rome and that of Byzantium, just as Rome was indebted to Greece, and France and England to Italy. Nor do the Slavs claim that they have not learned from the Germans. They have.

But this is no reason why the Germans should claim that they are entitled to dominate the Slavs. Because the Slavs have been received later into the circle of European



nations, it does not follow that they must submit to German domination, that they have no right to a free development. Did not the Germans, as a group of barbarous tribes, attack, molest, destroy the old Roman Empire? Did they not take over the fruits of the development of civilization in ancient Rome and in medieval Italy? Are they not most heavily indebted to the civilization of France and of England? Why do they not submit to Italy, or to France, or to England? Because you are some one's teacher, this does not make you his master, it does not turn him into a slave of yours. To promote civilization is every nation's duty, but it does not give rights of overlordship; that is what the Germans have never been able to understand.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Just twenty years ago the famous German historian, Theodor Mommsen, issued an appeal to the Germans in Austria, inciting them to a fight against the (western) Slavs (which meant especially Bohemians, Slovenes, and Poles). He drew forth a spirited reply from one of the most glorious scholars in modern Slavdom, my beloved teacher Oswald Balzer, professor of Polish legal history in the University of Lwów. From that reply, to which all friends of Slavdom can refer for inspiration, I should like to quote a few sentences, which seem in point at this time and can as well be applied to the relations between Germany and the western nations: "... To a great part of the German peoples the interests of culture have always been associated with the State interest, i.e., the State interest has been in the first place. They carried civilization to the Slavic East to gain for themselves political advantages, and they did not hesitate to give up the cause of culture whenever their own egotistic political interests required some sacrifice. Politicians and Germanizers, in a higher degree than civilizers, they have perpetually identified the idea of culture with the idea of their own State and their own nationality; they believed and wished to persuade the world—they even wanted the world to believe them—that the way to civilization leads only through Germany, and that there can be no better fortune for other peoples than to attain by that way to greater perfection. They proclaimed themselves chosen guardians of all who began to engage in the pursuits of culture later than themselves, without asking whether those others desired such guardianship, without reflecting that they could work for culture independently, having been endowed by God with the same abilities as Germans. . . . The Germans offered culture to the Slavs usually at the price of their giving up the greatest treasure, their own nationality; where the Slavs would not pay that price, the Germans simply obstructed their independent development and did not allow them to carry on the work of civilization. . . . German culture is neither the first, nor the last, nor the only culture which leads to perfection. . . ." To many persons unacquainted with

It is claimed against the Slavs that they are nothing but barbarians. Sometimes the Germans do not go as far as all that. But then they and their foreign friends (e.g., Professor Burgess) claim that the Slavs are unfit for political development. I should like to point out that of all European nations, Germany has the least right to reproach others with lack of political ability. Can anybody imagine a greater anarchy than that which existed in Germany in the later Middle Ages and well into the nineteenth century? Poland's and Russia's disorganization was due largely to foreign invasions. Germany's princes often combined among themselves or with foreign princes against their own emperor. It was not until 1870-1 that Germany, under the new leadership of Prussia, began to show real political unity—and whether the Prussian domination of Germany has been a success is just now a somewhat debatable question. Nor is there any need to brag about the German descent of the Romanovs (as is done, e.g., by Professor Burgess). Whether Russia would not have been much happier without them is again a question to be determined by impartial men.

It is claimed that the Slavs are unable to develop a healthy economic organization. Anybody who has studied Bohemian economic life under Hapsburg rule, or the Polish economic development, will have formed a different opinion. The Germans themselves know the truth about the matter. In a number of publications they exhort one another to arm themselves against the danger of an economic conquest by the Slavs.<sup>12</sup> The Polish coöperative societies, especially

European affairs these words would have meant nothing until the present war taught everybody what German methods are. The words of Professor Balzer, written in 1897, could equally well have been formulated by an observer of German behavior during the present war. There is method in it.

<sup>12</sup> Professor Ludwig Bernhard, who did some spying among Polish economic organizations in Prussian Poland for the benefit of the Prussian government, and was rewarded with a chair at the University of Berlin, devotes a large book to "the Polish community in the Prussian State" (*Das polnische Gemeinwesen im preussischen Staate*); Mr. Georg Kleinow in his book on "The

among farmers, can well serve as an example for many western countries—and you must remember that they have been developed in the teeth of government opposition.

The Slavs have made positive contributions to the civilization of the world. Until the Turkish conquest, Serbia was developing in a most promising way. In the field of literature she can claim that her ballads (some of them translated recently by my friends, Professor George R. Noyes and Mr. Leonard Bacon) deserve a high place among monuments of European popular poetry. In the fourteenth century her political development was higher than that of many a European nation, for instance, the code of Tsar Dushan deserves an honorable place among early European codifications. And look at Bohemia! In 1347–8 there was founded in Prague, the capital, by a king who was not a German, a university, which was the first in central Europe. Germany had no university at that time. The second university in central Europe was that of Cracow (Poland, 1364), and only the third was the German university of Vienna (1365). Then were founded other universities in Germany. The University of Prague soon became the center of Bohemian national progress, its rector early in the fifteenth century was the celebrated reformer and Bohemian patriot, Jan Huss; is not his name known to every civilized man and woman? Does it not prove that, while she was left independent, Bohemia was able to produce great men? And then, in the seventeenth century, came the great Bohemian reformer of education, known all over Europe, Komensky (Comenius). There had been many great men in the meantime, but I can only mention

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Future of Poland" (*Die Zukunft Polens*) studies the conditions in Russian Poland; there are numerous other books on the subject. The German chancellor, Prince von Bülow, said in 1908: "The Polish element has, under the protection of our statutes, especially in the field of economics developed an organization which is astonishing because of its consistent elaboration and concentrated leadership (*deren konsequente Durchführung und einheitliche Leitung erstaunlich ist*), and of which the great power serves always and everywhere the purposes of the political struggle against the German element . . ." (*Hörsch, Fürst von Bülow's Reden*, III, 62).



the greatest of the great. And then Austrian despotism put an end, for a time, to Bohemian progress. Yet progress there appeared again in the end of the eighteenth century, in spite of all obstacles. It has never abated since. You may have heard of Bohemian music—the Bohemians are supposed to be musically the ablest among the subjects of the Hapsburgs. You do not know of many first-class scholars whom Bohemia has produced, such as Šafařík, Palacky, Kadlec, and others. They have been there, however.

And Russia? Have you read novels by Turgeniev, and Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy? Have you heard the names of Gorki and Tchekhov? Do you know the music of Tchaikovsky, and Rakhmaninov, and many others? Do you know a scientist who needs not remember what the world owes to Mendeleev and Metchnikov? And these are only a few names which I take to be most widely known. There are scores upon scores of others.

Take Poland. In the thirteenth century a Pole (Vittellio) wrote the first modern treatise on optics. The fifteenth century produced a great development of the University of Cracow, and one of its professors (Brudzewski) was the first academic teacher of astronomy to the great Copernicus (Kopernik), who was himself a Pole and whose father was a citizen of Cracow. The development of political thought, of letters and science, in sixteenth-century Poland entitled her to a place among the most enlightened nations in Europe; one of her political writers (Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, called Modrevius) was the author of a great treatise on the Reform of the Republic, the German translation of which was the first exhaustive treatise on political science in that language! Does not all that prove that the Poles, too, have helped develop European civilization?

And without mentioning the hundreds of names which, though great in themselves, are unknown in England and America, let us think of the modern Polish novelist Sien-



kiewicz, of the pianist Paderewski, of the composers Chopin and Wieniawski, of the chemist Mme. Curie-Sklodowska. Much work done by Polish scholars, many works of art and literature, produced by Polish artists and writers, remain unknown to the west, partly because of language difficulties, partly because the Germans have taught the English and the Americans that there is no civilization among the Slavs.

Consider the history of Polish political institutions. How much blame has been heaped on the Poles on that score! Undoubtedly many things might have been better than they were. But the same is true of other nations. Hardly any European nation, except England, can boast of a glorious continuity of political progress. The external conditions were unfavorable to Polish progress in the seventeenth century and in the first part of the eighteenth, and yet there were many attempts at reform, attempts mostly frustrated by foreign intrigue, sometimes by foreign force. The world knows now that where there is a free government, agents of foreign despots can make use of political liberty to create mischief. That was true of Prussian and Russian agents in Poland. Yet even the old Polish institutions had some good sides. In 1772, just a short time before the first partition, Jean Jacques Rousseau, in response to a Polish request for suggestions as to a change of the Polish constitution, wrote his *Considerations on the Government of Poland*, which he prefaced with the following warning: “. . . Brave Poles, be careful; be careful lest, wishing to be too well, you make your position worse. Thinking of that which you want to acquire, do not forget that which you can lose. Correct, if that can be, the bad sides of your constitution; but do not look down upon that which has made you what you are. . . . It is in the bosom of that anarchy which is hateful to you that were formed those patriotic minds that have kept from you the yoke. . . . I do not say that things should be left as they are; but I do say that they must not be touched save with extreme

circumspection. At this moment one is struck by abuses more than by advantages. The time will come, I am afraid, when one will have a better sense of these advantages, and unfortunately that will be when they will have been lost.’<sup>13</sup>

The Poles realized that their constitution had to be changed radically. As soon as the political situation made it possible, a new constitution was proclaimed on May 3, 1791. It was the time of the French Revolution. Enlightened men in the west like Burke,<sup>14</sup> Horace Walpole and others were enthusiastic about the new constitution, which naturally displeased the King of Prussia and his German ally on the Russian throne. They procured the annihilation of the reform work, and carried out the second, and then the third partition of Poland. But the Poles have ever since been looking back to the tradition of the Third of May, with the firm conviction that the fall of Poland was due to brute force, and not to lack of political genius in the Polish nation. It took a long time before western scholars, under the influence of Germans and of charlatans like Thomas Carlyle,<sup>15</sup> acquiesced in the opinion that Poland

<sup>13</sup> *Gouvernement de Pologne*, chap. 1. That the old Polish constitution, even as it was, presented more than the aspect of a hopeless maze of political stupidities was understood, for instance, by an impartial German investigator of the old school, Hüppe (*Verfassung der Republik Polen*, 1867, p. viii): “. . . The constitution of Poland did not show political development at its height . . . yet the federal framework . . . has proved an institution of lasting value (*hat sich bewährt*). And because the Polish state was not cut into parts by feudalism, it shows unexpectedly more than one modern quality. . . .”

<sup>14</sup> Edmund Burke wrote in 1791 about the constitutional reform in Poland: “. . . In contemplating that change, humanity has everything to rejoice and to glory in,—nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to suffer. So far as it has gone, it probably is the most pure and defecated public good which ever has been conferred on mankind. . . . To add to this happy wonder, this unheard of conjunction of wisdom and fortune, not one drop of blood was spilled . . . the whole was effected with a policy, a discretion, an unanimity and secrecy, such as have never been before known on any occasion, but such wonderful conduct was reserved for this glorious conspiracy in favor of the true and genuine rights and interests of men. . . .” (*Works*, IV, 190 f., 1869).

<sup>15</sup> Carlyle’s invectives against Poland and Bohemia were based on complete lack of knowledge, though they pretended to be the result of historical research.

was unable to govern herself. There certainly had been a time when Poland's political development was considered an inspiration for mankind.<sup>16</sup>

I think I am justified in claiming that despite all difficulties the Slavs have always been aiming at progress in civilization. You are told, and truly told, that there are, for instance, in Russia many persons unable to read and write. Do not despise the Slavs for that. Ask whether the Slavs have not everywhere (in Russia under the old bureaucracy, in Austria, in Hungary, in Prussia) striven to educate the poor, to organize schools and reading rooms; whether that work has not been carried on often in the face of severe threats on the part of the government. In Prussia there have been until the present day innumerable prosecutions of Poles for "unauthorized instruction"; Russia under the old régime followed the example of the Prussian cousin. The glorious development of the "Society of the Popular School" in Austrian Poland (T. S. L.) will at all times remain the boast of Polish patriots just because of the great popularity of the institution, its ability to gather enthusiastic workers among rich and poor alike, and the efficiency of its work. The work of Bohemian and Serbian organizations will similarly be remembered with gratitude in days to come.

In days to come, when the Slavs will be free! There is a danger against which I want to warn you. Germany and Austria-Hungary are now raising the cry for "no annexations," "no disintegration of Germany," "no partition of Austria-Hungary." They are taking advantage of your lack of knowledge of European affairs to make you believe that England or France wants to conquer and oppress parts of Germany. That is absolutely untrue. What the Allies want is to take away from Germany and from the Hapsburgs those territories which the two reactionary powers have held in bondage by pure force, and which are alien to the Teutonic nationality. So far as the

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., *Letters of Horace Walpole*, XIV, 446; XV, 45, 142.



Slavs are concerned, Germany must give up her Polish provinces, that is, the provinces of Poznan (Posen), Silesia, West Prussia with the city of Gdansk, parts of East Prussia. Austria must give up Galicia. Prussian and Austrian Poland will thus be united with Russian Poland and form that "united, independent, and autonomous Poland" promised by President Wilson. Bohemia, including Moravia, and other parts of Austria or Hungary inhabited by Bohemians (and Slovaks), must be made independent. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slavonia, and the other southern Slav parts of Austria or Hungary must be set free to form part of the great southern Slav state. The Slavs do not want to form great conquering empires. They want to be allowed complete freedom in developing their own national life, together with other civilized nations. The days of autocracies, the days of governments formed and maintained by dynasties and in the interest of dynasties, are over.

I should like to appeal to you to get acquainted with the problems of Slav life. You will find a great field for help which will be very gratefully received. You will find probably many things that will require change, but I feel that you will also find a great many things worth appreciating.

Let me conclude by quoting the words of my great teacher, Professor Vinogradoff, a Russian who is today the greatest living authority on English legal history. He is one of those men who have proved to the world that the Slavs can help promote civilization. "The Slavs must have their chance in the history of the world, and the date of their coming of age will mark a new departure in the growth of civilization."





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